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ON THE NOMENCLATURE OF THE PACIFIC GRAY WHALE

BY WILLIAM E. SCHEVILL¹

The gray whale of the Pacific has until recently been called *Rhachianectes glaucus* (Cope). In 1937 van Deinse and Junge published an important paper of which the main part is a thorough comparative study of subfossil *Eschrichtius robustus* bones from the Netherlands, comprising one adult cranium and two juvenile crania, one of which was associated with the mandibles, scapulae, and other parts of the skeleton. These they compared with an adult *Rhachianectes glaucus* skeleton in the British Museum, as well as with the published material on both forms. Although the subfossil bones are naturally worn and fragmentary, as well as being for the most part juvenile, they present ample characters to indicate that they and the gray whale are congeneric. At this point I would like to emphasize that the following criticisms of van Deinse and Junge's conclusions are directed solely at their taxonomy; this involves no disparagement of their important and valuable osteological work, which has demonstrated the generic identity of *Eschrichtius* Gray 1864 and *Rhachianectes* Cope 1869 (= *Agaphelus* Cope 1868). But they also argue for specific identity, and thus unite *Rhachianectes glaucus* (Cope) 1868 with *Eschrichtius robustus* (Lilljeborg) 1861. Moreover, they argue that Dudley's scrag whale (1725), named *Balaena gibbosa* by Erxleben (1777, p. 610), is the same form, and therefore say (1937, p. 181), "After this it is clear that the name of this whale must be changed into *Eschrichtius gibbosus* (Erxleben). We must emphasize that with the bones we have now at hand we cannot give any argument that the Pacific and Atlantic representatives of *Eschrichtius* should be specifically different." But by the same token these bones cannot prove that these whales are specifically identical.

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Additional and better material of *E. robustus* may present more specific characters, but until such material turns up, it seems unfortunate to take a well-grounded name of a well-characterized living form, known from complete specimens, and replace it with that of a form so imperfectly known from such incomplete material that specific characters cannot be entirely established; instead it seems better not to change the name of the well-known form.

It is even less desirable to use the name (*gibbosa* Erxleben) of a form which from the beginning has been an unrecognizable literary curiosity. Considering the available information, which is scanty though oft repeated, the most that can be said for *Balaena gibbosa* Erxleben is that it may be an *Eschrichtius*, but since it is not specifically well characterized and since nothing sufficiently like it has ever again been reported from anywhere near the type locality ("the Coast of New England") or elsewhere in the Atlantic, it seems to be stretching probability to submerge in it known forms from other regions. Detailed consideration of the uncertainties in attempting to identify Dudley's scrag whale (*Balaena gibbosa* Erxleben) are omitted here. From time to time cetologists have tried to identify this beast, but have always been frustrated by various irreconcilable data, the chief of which is perhaps the utter lack of specimens. Cope's attempt to embody *gibbosa* Erxleben was undermined by his confusion over a dilapidated specimen of *Balaenoptera acuto-rostrata*, so that he formally withdrew in 1884 (p. 1124). Although he did not publish details, it is probable that Cope used much the same reasoning as van Deinse and Junge in associating Dudley's scrag and the Pacific gray whale in the same genus. Thus it appears best to continue to use *robusta* Lilljeborg for the subfossil European form.

As to the nomenclature of the Pacific gray whale, it seems reasonable to retain the trivial name *glaucus* until better material of *Eschrichtius robustus* may demonstrate specific identity (although Cederlund (1939, p. 282) believes the holotype sufficient for this). It is therefore suggested that the living Pacific gray whale be called *Eschrichtius glaucus* (Cope).

This status may be summarized thus:

Genus

Eschrichtius Gray 1864 (p. 350). Type species (by subsequent designation by Lilljeborg 1865, p. 494): *Balaenoptera robusta* Lilljeborg 1861.

Species

Eschrichtius robustus (Lilljeborg)

Balaenoptera robusta Lilljeborg 1861, p. 602.

The Gräsö whale.

Subfossil in northwestern Europe (English Channel to Baltic Sea).

Eschrichtius glaucus (Cope)*Agaphelus glaucus* Cope 1868a, p. 160, 1868b, p. 225.*Rhachianectes glaucus* Cope 1869, p. 15.

The California or Pacific gray whale; devilfish.

Recent in North Pacific Ocean (Baja California to Korea).

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